

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 22, 36 and 37 as follows. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Withdrawn) Method of preparing microcapsules having a core with dimensions ranging from 50 to 1200 μm and a polymeric membrane containing at least one active ingredient and, optionally, at least one membrane additive characterised in that the application of said polymeric membrane to said core is carried out by a process of coacervation by means of phase separation of a suspension of said active ingredient and, optionally, of said membrane additive in a solution of a water-soluble or a water-insoluble coating polymer.
2. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 1 comprising the following steps:
 - (a) forming a solution of the membrane polymer in an aqueous or in an organic solvent;
 - (b) suspending the cores, the particles of active ingredient and, optionally, any membrane additive in the solution obtained in (a),
 - (c) causing coacervation of the membrane polymer in the suspension obtained in (b) by means of phase separation, thereby forming a polymeric membrane,
 - (d) optionally, subjecting the microcapsules to a hardening treatment of the membrane,
 - (e) recovering the microcapsules thereby obtained.
3. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 2 wherein step a) and b) are carried out as a single step.
4. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the membrane polymer is a water insoluble polymer, the solution of said polymer is in an organic solvent and said active ingredient is water-soluble.
5. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 4 wherein said polymer is ethylcellulose.

6. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 4 wherein the solvent used in step a) is cyclohexane.
7. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 4 wherein the additive added in step b) is selected from the group consisting of lactose, mannitol, polyvinylpyrrolidone, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, methylcellulose, hydroxypropylcellulose, swelling agents, sodium carboxymethylamide, croscarmellose, crospovidone, pregelatinized starch, pH modifiers and combinations thereof.
8. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 4, wherein in step c) phase separation takes place by variation in temperature.
9. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the membrane polymer is a water soluble polymer, the solution of said polymer is in an aqueous solvent and said active ingredient is water-insoluble.
10. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 9 wherein said polymer is selected from the group consisting of gelatine, cellulose acetate phthalate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate and derivatives thereof.
11. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the solvent used in step a) is water at a pH comprised between 1 and 9.
12. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the pH is comprised between 4 and 7.
13. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the additive added in step b) is selected from the group consisting of dibasic calcium phosphate, calcium sulphate, barium sulphate, calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, silicates, and combinations thereof.
14. (Withdrawn) Method as claimed in claim 9, wherein in step c) phase separation takes place by pH variation, variation in temperature or insolubilisation of the polymer by adding phase-separation inducing agents.

15. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules comprising a core having dimension ranging from 50 to 1200 μm and a polymeric membrane coating said core based on a water-soluble coating polymer and containing at least one water-insoluble active ingredient dispersed therein in the form of solid particles, said particles being dispersed inside said polymeric membrane with a concentration that decreases progressively moving from the core towards the distal part of the membrane.

16. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15, obtainable by a method as claimed in claim 4.

17. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15 wherein the taste of the active principle is masked.

18. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15 characterised by a modified release of the active principle.

19. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 18 wherein said modified release is a delayed release.

20. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15, wherein the water-soluble polymer is chosen from gelatine, cellulose acetate phthalate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate and derivatives thereof.

21. (Withdrawn) Microcapsule as claimed in claim 15, wherein said polymeric membrane further contains water-insoluble membrane additives.

22. (Currently Amended) Microcapsules comprising:

a) a core having a dimension ranging from 50 to 1200 μm ; and

b) a coacervated polymeric membrane coating said core comprising:

1) a water-insoluble coating polymer; and

2) ~~comprising~~ at least one water-soluble active ingredient homogeneously dispersed ~~therein~~ in said water-insoluble coating polymer in the form of solid particles; said water-insoluble coating polymer being present in amounts ranging from 2% to 40% and

said active ingredient being present in amounts ranging from 0.2% to 21%, with respect to the weight of the microcapsule.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22 comprising a modified release of the active ingredient.

25. (Previously presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the water-insoluble polymer is ethylcellulose.

26. (Previously presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the polymeric membrane further comprises water-soluble additives.

27. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15, wherein the active ingredient has dimensions ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm .

28. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 27, wherein the active ingredient has dimensions ranging from 1 to 30 μm , and ranges from 0.2 to 21% by weight of the microcapsules.

29. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15, wherein the core constitutes 50% to 95% by weight of the microcapsules and the coating polymer varies from 2 to 20% by weight of the microcapsule.

30. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15, wherein the membrane contains additives having a mean diameter ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm and constituting from 2 to 10% by weight of the microcapsule.

31. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 30, wherein the membrane additives have a mean diameter ranging from 7 to 30 μm and constitute from 3% to 5% by weight of the microcapsule.

32. (Withdrawn) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 15 coated with a further coating layer.

33. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the active ingredient has dimensions ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm .
34. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 33, wherein the active ingredient has dimension ranging from 1 to 30 μm .
35. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the core constitutes 50% to 95% by weight of the microcapsules and the coating polymer varies from 2 to 20% by weight of the microcapsule.
36. (Currently amended) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22, wherein the membrane contains additives having a mean diameter ranging from 0.1 to 80 μm and the membrane additives ~~constituting~~ constitute from 2 to 10% by weight of the microcapsule.
37. (Currently amended) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 36, wherein the membrane additives have a mean diameter ranging from 7 to 30 μm and the membrane additives constitute from 3% to 5% by weight of the microcapsule.
38. (Previously Presented) Microcapsules as claimed in claim 22 coated with a further coating layer.